837 588 548 [586] Free Marriage. The only marriage which can be called free, since it is accepted by both parties, is that of a woman who is unable to endure her first husband and leaves her village with the intention of becoming a prostitute. Divorce is quite rare because the Moaga does not readily agree to it. As she passes through a village, she asks for hospitality, and the news soon spreads that a "free" woman is staying at such-and-such a place. The young men hasten to her and seek to win her favors. Gifts are sent to her, and her hostess is used as go-between. Nine times out of ten, the woman accepts the candidate preferred by her hostess. After some questions concerning his origins and circumstances, one of the young men is accepted as a temporary lover. His comrades come to his aid, and for a few days there is a veritable festival in the village. There is a slight change in the [177] regular fare, since meat is added to the mush; chickens, raised with considerable difficulty, are used for this special treat. This semblance of marriage is thus celebrated. As has been pointed out, however, there has been no divorce, and the deserted husband soon learns the whereabouts of his wife. As soon as he finds out what village she is in -- it may be 100 kilometers away -- he promptly sets out, carrying in a sheepskin enough ground millet for the journey and 500 to 1,000 cowries. He also carries a rooster which, along with the shells, will be offered to the chief of the canton where the lover lives, to whom he will make his claim.

[578] Unions of this sort give rise to three-quarters of the quarrels with which the canton or province chiefs have to deal. A young Moaga who desires peace of mind never regularizes the situation by a so-called marriage even though he may not be able to resist the temptation to harbor the woman for a few days. In any event the affair is easily broken off since sooner or later the woman, eager for change, will want a new lover.

583 Thus, it may be said that although forced marriage has the disadvantage of having a girl marry without her consent, still it also has advantages and a degree of security because the woman, fearing [178] her parents' wrath, rarely leaves her husband. Furthermore, this type of marriage is vastly preferable from the standpoint of peace

843 4. A pregnant woman must not step over her husband; this would make him ill.

853 5. The sexual act may be performed with impunity in the courtyard of a dwelling (at night). Otherwise, it is expressly forbidden to do it outside the house and in any way other than lying on a mat or Peulh secco, in any case never directly on the ground.

845 837 847 6. The delivery will be difficult and complicated if the child was conceived in adultery. If the woman is to be delivered, it is absolutely necessary that she confess the name of her accomplice in the presence of witnesses. In this case, if the husband demands it -- and he always does -- the newborn child is killed by the erring wife immediately after it is born (1). [185]

1. The procedure is as follows. Some young mothers simply twist its neck and strangle it. Others put the baby in a jar of lukewarm water. The baby instinctively drinks and finally drowns.

837 684 Adultery. Before the arrival of the French, adultery committed by the nakomsé (descendants of naba) was punished by the death of the guilty couple. Among ordinary Mossi, the culprit was simply banished from the family.

However, if the lover was not a relative of the woman's husband, he was forbidden henceforth to come to the village where the woman lived. If he failed to observe this rule, he risked being killed.

837 As a general rule, a Moaga woman takes a lover in a village some distance away from her husband's village and not far from her own. When she asks her husband's permission to visit her family, she profits by the opportunity to spend some time with her lover or to let him know that she is going to her parents' home.

Dissolution of Marriage. Divorce.

586 842 A divorce may be imposed by a husband who no longer loves his wife, but neither ill-health nor sterility may be invoked for the purpose. In the latter case, it is simply assumed that God does not want the woman to have children. She is often regarded with scorn, but sometimes no attention is paid to her lack of children.

685 entitled to complain and merely removed the animal. If the damage was caused by a cow or donkey, the owner of the field had to obtain a witness and was entitled to recover damages.

425 Whoever found an object of small value, such as a knife or even a garment, was entitled to keep it, but anything valuable, such as a sheep, a donkey, or, all the more, a cow, had to be handed over to the naba and became his property.

689 837 The province chief alone could pass sentence on a rapist. He was beaten and put in irons, the girl was returned to her family, and, if she gave birth, the child was killed. If the girl had been promised to the naba, the rapist was put to death. An adulterer caught in flagrante delicto could be killed by the deceived husband, but if he had not been caught in flagrante delicto, if he had managed to run away, or if he had merely been denounced by the woman, the deceived husband could do nothing. A girl's seducer usually became her husband if she gave birth, but he had to provide another girl for her betrothed.

781 787 837 The province chief had a special procedure to insure the faithfulness of his numerous wives and his pages. When a wife or page did not behave properly, the Poẽnaba was supposed to point them out to the naba. He proceeded as follows. Every Friday the Poẽnaba left his village on foot, a whip in his hand. A servant preceded him with a leather satchel containing charms. No one was allowed to come near him. Everyone fled into the bush, and the path he had followed was closed to other people until they learned that the dreadful man had reached the home of the naba. The wives were gathered together. The Poẽnaba filled a large gourd with water, poured in his ingredients, and sat before it. The women came to him one by one and cast their reflection in the water. The Poẽnaba looked in and claimed to recognize those wives who were faithful and those who were not. The former were allowed to go free, but they were often beaten to remove any possible inclination to unfaithfulness. Those designated as unfaithful were seized and had to denounce their accomplice. Both the man and woman were clubbed to death. If the woman pointed out as guilty had no accomplice or refused to name him, she alone was killed. Women still point out with terror the place of execution. This procedure was very barbarous, and its abuses were flagrant. To avoid an accusation which would cost them /27/ their lives, the poor women were ready to do anything, and they presented the Poẽnaba with all the gifts they could gather in order to be spared.

584
583 have borrowed. In addition, he would expose himself and the preferred suitor to the vengeance of the rejected one.

583 The bride price is not exorbitant. The total gifts, spread over a period of years, amount to some fifty francs, without counting the work days. Nevertheless, it requires sufficient means to secure at least the necessary cowries. Besides, the child's father prefers to give her to someone who already boasts a certain fame and some wealth, in short, to an elderly man. /30/ This is why children are promised to old dotards, and white-haired men are paired with young girls; while the old men's sons of marriageable age cannot get wives. If the father has the means to pay the bride price, he carefully refrains from helping his son, even if the latter has found a match to his liking.
587 It is true that all the father's wives are inherited by the oldest son,
578 who gives some to his younger brothers; but this occurs only at the
593 old man's death, and this may not happen for a long time. This explains why the oldest son wishes for his father's death, and why the father sends the son away for fear of a premature end. It is only fair to add that some men, with a better understanding of their own interests, marry off their sons as soon as they are old enough.

595 Polygamy exists among the Mossi as in all Black countries. The
[556] wealth of a man is gauged by the number of his wives. Women furnish hands to till the soil, for the wife works in the fields like the husband. Women also furnish children, and if these are daughters, young men will come to offer their services (dakonré) and one day take the girls in marriage; or the father will receive gifts. If the children are boys, they will later aid the father in his work. In these countries where each lives for himself alone, where selfishness reigns supreme, polygamy is easily explained, but it undoubtedly results in a lower birth rate. White-bearded old men cannot have children as numerous and sound as young men in their prime, and the latter, deprived of wives, wear themselves out with their excesses. It is true that those who can afford a dozen wives are few; most have to be content with two, three, or four. Some nabas, nevertheless, own veritable herds of women, and this is certainly a grievous abuse. Their wives are numbered in the hundreds. The greatest moral disorder reigns in those harems, where the boys who serve as grooms and pages spend most of their time among their master's wives. This explains the precautions taken by the women's owners and the eunuchs of the Moro Naba, as well as the Poënaba and his sinister duties.
[837]

593 not shelter her but must on the contrary return her to her husband.
562 If difficulties arise, the husband appeals to the naba, who forces the wife to return to her husband, at whose hands she will get a beating when she arrives....

593 "...The powers of a deceived husband over his wife's lover
837 were quite fearsome prior to our occupation. He could, at will,
684 either deal with the culprit himself or defer his complaint to the naba. If he dealt himself with his rival and killed him, he handed out the adulterous woman to the Moro Naba and did not have to answer for his crime. If he merely wounded the man, no matter how seriously, he was regarded as having acted in the fullness of his rights as an injured husband, and he kept the wife and gave her a beating. If he appealed to the naba, the guilty pair were punished by being put in irons for a variable period of time. Furthermore, if the adultery had been committed with the wife of a dapouy naba of the Moro Naba (that is to say, a man to whom the Moro Naba had himself given some girl in marriage), the accomplice was compelled to pay the deceived husband a fine of 100,000 cowries.

"Finally, in case of adultery with a chief's wife, both culprits were put to death."

On this subject I find in my notes that prior to our occupation, when a naba was deceived by one of his wives, he killed her with
[762] poison and ordered the wife's lover to commit suicide. The latter did this by plunging the head of a poisoned arrow into the calf of his leg.

"It is plain," the author of the Monographie goes on to say, "that the lover was dealt with in the most rigorous manner of all. He could be put to death by the deceived husband in every case, while the wives of a chief were alone liable to supreme punishment. The lover could also be punished with a fine, in a single case anticipated by custom. Finally, he was invariably put in irons on the naba's orders if the deceived husband placed a complaint against him.

"As for the adulterous wife, except when she was /563/ handed over to the Moro Naba by her husband as reparation for the murder of her partner, punishment for her misdemeanor amounted merely to a more or less rigorous beating or to irons for a short period of time. She could, it is true, be turned out by her husband, but the latter

593 made use of this right quite rarely. The woman has productive
837 value in terms of children and labor. And then, in the majority
684 of cases, the husband would merely fulfill the dearest of his wife's desires by doing so."

593 While the Mossi wife has duties toward her husband, the latter
586 also has obligations toward his wives.

"A wife," says the Monographie, "has the right to demand from her husband more than mere platonic relations.

"Should the latter prevail, however, owing to the husband's impotence or illness, or simply as a result of ill will, the neglected wife would communicate the situation to the first wife of the family head, who would in turn inform her spouse.

"Should the husband's behavior be caused by physical incapacity, the woman would be taken from him and given to one of his brothers, or if there were none to his nearest relative, his sons excepted. Should his behavior be due merely to ill will, however, remonstrances would be made to him, and should these prove fruitless at the end of a few days, the woman would be considered free to return to her family."

593 Just as the husband owes his wives fulfillment of the conjugal
837 duty, he also owes them relative faithfulness.

"The husband has an obligation of relative faithfulness toward his wives, that of not keeping a concubine at the conjugal domicile.
586 Should he transgress this rule, his wives would be fully entitled to obtain a divorce from him, unless he should agree to turn out his partner as a result of his wives' complaint or the intervention of the family head.

"This rule is strictly obeyed, except for the Mossi of the Kipirsi who allow the presence of the husband's concubines among his legitimate wives, and who have rules governing their respective positions.

"In any case the husband is everywhere allowed to /564/ deceive his wives as he pleases outside the conjugal domicile, and they are not entitled to complain about this in any way. Nevertheless, they nearly always have at their disposal a practically infallible although circuitous means of causing the greatest inconvenience to the fickle husband and his partner. As a result of the custom that pledges girls in marriage at a very early age, a husband can hardly commit

593 adultery except with a woman who is already married. A deceived
837 wife who wishes to take her revenge need only reveal to the spouse of her husband's partner the criminal relations that victimize them both."

593 Let us add that another of the husband's duties is to render help
602 to his wives' relatives if the latter are in needy circumstances.

Of course, the failure to fulfill these obligations could cause
593 the wife to request a divorce. Divorce thus exists among the Mossi,
586 although women rarely resort to it. The bride price is never claimed back by the husband, even if the woman has remained sterile. The children always devolve to the husband.

The husband, on the other hand, may turn out his wife, but Mossi husbands do not usually make use of this right.

585 Let us add that the matter of the girl's virginity at marriage
836 is settled by the Mossi as by most other Blacks. If a girl is bought or betrothed from a very young age, she must preserve herself intact for her future husband. An unbetrothed girl, however, is free to use her own body when she reaches puberty, and if she marries later she cannot be reprimanded for having become a woman prior to her wedding.

567 Let us now proceed to the status of slaves.

Two kinds of slaves are distinguished among the Mossi, aside from the usual distinction between trade slaves and house slaves.

1. The daparé (etymologically, "followers," "men who walk behind their master," from da, "man" and paré, "behind"). They are unmarried slaves.

2. The bagaré ("men of the enclosure"). Those are married captives.

/565/ The daparé live with their master and always remain at his disposal for any work that may come up. They have no small individual plots, therefore, and their master provides them with food and clothing at all times. When they reach marriageable age, their master buys them a wife (or at least it was so in the old days; she would cost the master about 60,000 or 70,000 cowries), and then they settle on their own.

562 When she dies, a woman's property goes to her children. The
428 objects used by women go to the daughters (bracelets, skirt cloths), while other items (animals, etc.) go to the sons. More exactly, the first-born is favored among the sons and the oldest girl among the daughters. If there are no children, the husband does not take anything, and whatever the wife leaves goes to her family, to her sisters and brothers in the first line of descent. Not having had any children by the deceased, the husband would be ashamed to take what she left.

837 Adultery. —The wife owes faithfulness to her spouse. Unfaithfulness, however, is not very important, for unless it occurs repeatedly, it does not usually result in a break. The husband merely beats his wife and scolds her.

837 When the wife has fled to a lover, her husband goes in search of
684 her. The lover will have to provide a sheep (the sheep may be re-
684 placed by a goat), a chicken, and two canari of dolo, all of which
782 are to be sacrificed to the ancestors so they will forgive the woman.
769 She cannot re-enter her house until the sacrifice has been performed; without it the ancestors would kill her. They are unbending, more so than the husband to be sure, about the latter's honor. Should a husband know his wife to be guilty and do nothing about it, the ancestors would be furious and they would kill him, hence the necessity for action on the husband's part.

837 If the husband cannot find his runaway wife, the duty of searching
684 for her and bringing her back to him falls to his father-in-law.

Formerly, before the French occupation, if the lover did not want to return the woman, her father appealed to the naba, that is, the chief of the village or canton, or even to the Moro Naba, who sent horsemen to arrest the guilty pair. He restored the wife to her husband and confiscated for his own benefit the lover's animals and millet granaries.

Nowadays, since the French occupation, one appeals to the commanding officer of the circle and to the native provincial court for the wife's return.

684 Sometimes, in the past, the husband killed his wife's lover when
643 he caught him flagrante delicto. He had the right to do so, but this caused him to lose his /246/ wife who became the property of the Moro Naba. The lover's property likewise reverted to the Moro Naba.

684 In any event, the husband did not have the right to kill his wife
643 except when she was caught flagrante delicto, unless he was the
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Moro Naba or a member of the aristocracy. When one of his wives deceived him, the Moro Naba had her killed along with her lover. The guilty pair were strangled with cotton bands. Concerning the nakomsé /descendants of nabas/, the true nakomsé (for the descendants of Naba Rawa and Naba Yadega are no longer considered nakomsé at the present day and have reverted to the mass of the common people), the true nakomsé related to royalty since the time of Naba Nabacéré (1625-1655) and his descendants, Pigo (1720-1739) and Kango (1754-1787), when one of their wives had deceived them, they appealed first to the Basi Naba, head of the nakomsé, and presented the guilty pair to him. The Basi Naba sent them on to the Moro Naba, who had the woman and her lover strangled. The lover's property went to the Rassam Naba, chief of the people of Bingo who were in charge of the execution. The same procedure applied when the people of Bingo (house slaves of the Moro Naba) executed the wife of a Moro Naba and her lover. The property, which could not with decency revert to the deceived Moro Naba, went to the Rassam Naba, chief of Bingo.

Just as the wife owes faithfulness to her husband, the husband owes faithfulness to his wife or wives. Violations of this rule are frequent, however, and the husband's escapades are far less important than those of the wife. In all events, the husband's infidelity never entails annulment of the marriage. Although the wives do not have the right to say much when their husband deceives them (provided he does not install his concubine in the conjugal household, and this in fact never happens), they do have two possibilities of revenge. The first is very rarely used by the Mossi women of Yatenga. It consists of notifying the husband of the woman with whom their husband is deceiving them. This results in more or less serious trouble for their husband. If their husband ventures to take into his hut for awhile a woman who does not belong to him, it may happen (and this occurs more frequently) that his wives will gather, wait for the guilty woman at the door of the soukala, and give her a good thrashing when she comes out. The husband cannot say anything to them. He himself is protected, so to speak, by his status as a husband and left outside the argument, but revenge is taken on his unlucky accomplice, and while nothing is said to him, he can do nothing to protect her.

Divorce.—Divorce occurs in Yatenga more frequently than among the Bambara for reasons which were explained above. Here are the

586 8. Incest. In case incest is committed by one of the spouses, the other has the right to request a divorce. The gifts remain in the husband's possession if the wife is guilty, or revert to her if it was the husband who commited incest."

Such are the major theoretical cases which may result in divorce. Let us first return to one of them: nonfulfillment of the conjugal duty on the husband's part. The results noted by Vadier seem contradictory to those which we mentioned above (under "conjugal duty"). Actually, no contradiction is involved. When a husband does not fulfill his conjugal duty toward his wife (this, incidentally, occurs quite rarely), either the woman has only praise for her husband in all /248/ other respects, or he is cruel and mean and she is dissatisfied with him on other counts. In the first instance, she takes a lover outside her husband's compound, a liaison to which he voluntarily shuts his eyes, and she does not request a divorce. In the second case, she does request one. That is how the situation is actually resolved.

[837]

586 837 Among the instances of divorce enumerated by Vadier, the most frequent, or rather the least rare, are as follows. (1) Continual infidelity on the part of the wife. I say "continual," for as we have already noted, while in principle a single infidelity on the woman's part enables the husband to ask for a divorce, in actual fact a wife is never sent back for a single breach of the marriage contract. Instead, she is merely beaten. If the woman persists in betraying her husband, however, he eventually sends her away. (2) Insults passed between each other by the husband and wife in a moment of anger do not count, but insults by the husband about his wife's relatives or by a wife about the husband's relatives are serious. (Incidentally, this sensitivity on the subject of relatives is not peculiar to the Mossi. It is common to all the Sudanese Negroes I have seen, Bambara, Malinké, etc.) Thus, if the husband insults his wife's relatives, she may request a divorce. Actually, a woman who loves her husband does not tell her relatives about insults which he may have aimed at them in a moment of anger. She says nothing and does not ask for a divorce. If she holds other grudges against her husband, however, or secretly wishes for a separation, she will eagerly take advantage of this motive which is considered to be serious. As regards the wife's insults against her husband's relatives (like the preceding, an unusual case among the Mossi), the same thing applies. Either the husband loves his wife and says nothing, or he does not love her and takes this opportunity to get rid of her.

586 578 602 [171]

428 As a result, an heir may come into his share of the inheritance through a gift received during the lifetime of the deceased.

431 /273/ Gifts inter vivos. —A Mossi may, while alive, give away whatever he pleases of his own property.

Since he is absolute master of these goods and thus entitled to use them as he sees fit, no one has the right to question the gifts he makes.

421 Incidentally, let us recall that heads of families, compounds, work groups, and households are only the managers and not the owners, in the Roman sense, of the family, zaka, work group, or household property, respectively. As for private, individual goods on which the jus utendi et abutendi may be exercised, we know what they amount to among the Mossi. In practice, moreover, the Mossi are far from taking much advantage of this theoretical right. Here, nevertheless, we are concerned with theory, and the following rules pertain to it.

431 A gift made inter vivos must be made before several witnesses in order to be valid.

No special status is required in order to receive a gift.

The wife possesses the same rights as the husband. The gift will [837] nevertheless be worthless if it is proved that the beneficiary is or was her lover.

596 We are now finished with the Mossi family.

To summarize, as we already stated earlier, this family is communal and patriarchal.

Its communalism, however, is quite unstable. People live, not in family groups, but in family subgroups (the zaka). They work, not in family subgroups, but in sub-subgroups (the work groups). In former times, the zaka may have been a community of labor as well as a community of habitation. As we shall see later /not translated/, this is now the case among the Foulsé or Nioniossé /Nyonyose/, where sometimes it is the zaka that constitutes the community of labor and sometimes it is the work group, and where there seems to be an evolution from the former state of affairs to the latter.

As for patriarchy, it is very clearly defined and established. The family revolves around the man and not around the woman. As I have stated, certain signs induce us to believe that the Mossi family, like the Sudanese family in general, was once matriarchal in the very distant past. At all events, this has long ceased to be the case, and we are dealing now with an unstable communalism paired with clearly defined patriarchy.

8: Skinner E-5 (1955-1957) 1958
FA28 Mossi FA28

595 797 182 co-wives and other women of the extended families. Even the Catholic husbands would not help their wives with household tasks requiring more than one person, nor would they violate tradition by chatting with their wives except at night in their huts. Another factor is that after the Mossi Christian [846] woman has given birth to a child, she follows the traditional custom and goes back to her parents' home to remain there during the two or three years' lactation period. This imposes a great hardship on a Catholic husband because during this time he is left without wife or helpmate. In the extended family household there would have been women to take care of a man's material needs, and his mistresses would have taken care of his sexual needs. The Catholic can and does ask the mission for a young girl to take care of his material needs, but of course she is not expected to satisfy his sexual desires. Obviously this arrangement is not satisfactory, and many Catholic men, [837] with the acquiescence of their wives, keep mistresses. Dim Delobson comments:

> Ouagadougou has a large number of Christians, but does this mean that these people in their love for the church respect all her rules? Alas! there are a large number of Christians who oblige their lawful wives to leave the conjugal couch and make way for the accommodation of mistresses . . . in conformity with the old custom. But this is a subject which is too delicate to discuss further. I only note it in passing: *Noli me tangere* (1934:169).

797 794 Despite the influence of tradition on Mossi Catholics, I feel it would be a mistake to say that the complexity of Catholic dogma is one of the drawbacks to missionary success in this country. One Mossi has already been made a bishop of the Catholic Church, and most of the proselytizing in Manga falls on the two Mossi priests and the five Mossi nuns. Under the supervision of two White Fathers, the Catholic children and adults are acquainted with the dogma and rituals of the church. The festivals are well attended and celebrated with as much pomp as possible. Although the Mass is sung in Latin, the Mossi have adapted some of their traditional tunes to the Mass, and use their own language for prayers and hymns. Catholics observe all the sacraments including Confession—a sacrament which is hazardous from the Mossi point of view, because man must lay bare his innermost thoughts to the priests, who, in the final analysis, are Europeans and thus administrators.

It is true that even the staunchest Catholics in Manga have not abandoned all belief in traditional rituals and religious credos. For example, many Mossi Catholics believe in the existence of sorcerers, but the Catholic Church [754] does not recognize the existence of sorcerers or such evil forces (I have met White Fathers who believe that there are unexplainable psychic and physical phenomena in Africa), and moreover has no way of dealing with them. "But," says Dim Delobson (1934:136), "the Mossi believe so strongly in the power of such entities, that even those converted to Christianity cannot always escape the action of malevolent practitioners." The result is that many Catholics desert the church when they believe that only traditional specialists can help them with personal problems. Catholic families easily aban-

10:Hammond E-5 (1954-1956) 1964 FA28 Mossi FA28
Yatenga

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604 indirectly from the good will of his ancestral spirits whose benevolence Ego often invokes.

Ambivalence follows from other characteristics of the relationship. Resentment of Ego's depredations of her husband's property and jealous concern for the inheritance rights of her own children appear to be at least partially balanced by a share of the affection her husband shows for Ego. However, joking in this relationship is asymmetrical. The mother's brother's wife takes the more aggressive role, and from the vehemence of her joking, and the [152] structural nature of the relationship, it appears likely that amity lies less heavily in the balance than hostility. The groups to which the two parties belong are equal in status. Their respective positions within them, of course, are not, and this is reflected in the aforementioned asymmetry. Each party is obviously independent of the authority system of the other.

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607 *Joking Between Siblings-in-Law*

[144] Siblings-in-law who joke are separated by the rule of sib exogamy observed among the Mossi. Reciprocity is basic to the marriage contract that unites their respective kin groups. Several factors tend to create ambivalence in the relationship. Both kin groups—in particular, the extended families of the two marriage partners—profit from the reciprocal tie established between [87] them, but possible failure on the part of either group to reciprocate adequately, particularly with regard to marriage payments, constitutes a persistent source [58] of potential friction. Moreover, the Mossi observe the levirate. Joking between siblings-in-law who are potential spouses, yet are presently constrained by a [137] prohibition against adultery, has frequently been ascribed the function of reducing tension in a situation of conflict. The kin groups of siblings-in-law [147] are always structurally equivalent because groups occupying significantly dif- [58] ferent strata in Mossi society do not intermarry. As members of autonomous descent groups the participants are obviously independent of one another.

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614 *Joking Between Sibs*

Sibs (or lineages) whose members joke with one another are, of course, also separate groups.[2] They are always united by a strong tradition of reciprocal social and economic aid. Ambivalence apparently stems from the conflict between this tradition of reciprocity and actual competing claims to land. The origin of joking relationships between two descent groups is often ascribed to the alleged fact that, when they first arrived in the village, leaders [423] of both falsely claimed to the chief that he and his kinsmen had arrived first, and thus had a prior right to land, and that the members of the other group were their slaves. Despite their jocular allegations, both groups are in fact structurally equal and independent.

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561 *Joking Between Age-Sets*

Joking between age-sets within an age-grade varies with the generational

11: Skinner E-5 (1955-1957) 1964
FA28 Mossi FA28

9. In Dim Delobson's account (p. 60), an unnamed wife of the Mogho Naba ran away, and he allegedly tried to follow her because she was the only person in his household who knew how to cook his favorite food. 000

It is interesting that the Mossi have a tradition in which their ruler undergoes the same experience as many a Mossi husband, namely, being betrayed by his wife. It is also interesting that Mogho Naba Waraga is the ruler named in this incident. He is the ruler who waged a five-year-long civil war with one of his vassals. It may well be that his ministers devised the myth about his wife in order to prevent him from leaving the capital to fight. [837]

10. The Mossi practice of tasting food before giving it to another person is obviously connected with the fear of poison. The Mossi believe that only a boorish person would give another person something to eat without first tasting it himself. [576]

11. The full significance of this ceremony is unclear, for the Mossi hesitate to talk about it. It is known that the "sacred fire" is linked to the nocturnal visits of the royal ancestors. But the relationship of the fire to another sacred fire kept in Koubri district (about seventeen miles from Ouagadougou) is not known. [372]

Faithful to Mossi tradition or ignorant of the true nature of the ceremony, Dim Delobson says nothing about the ceremony and does not mention the presence of the namtibo. However, he does report that the palace guards would kill anyone who approached the place where the rite was being performed (p. 62). [114]

12. There are several traditions concerning female regents. However, I believe that they may have their basis in the role the Mogho Naba's daughter played during the interregnum.

13. Mossi genealogies show that only in one case in which the nam passed from a Mogho Naba to his brother did the former Mogho Naba's sons receive districts from their uncle, the new ruler. Since it is difficult to believe that the eleven other Mogho Nanamse who were succeeded by their brothers died without issue, it can only be concluded that the descendants of a ruler who did not inherit the nam were ignored by their uncles in power.

14. To this council could be added other men whose experience was valued. For example, the Baloum Naba was called upon in 1942 to give advice about a successor to Kom.

15. Dim Delobson, pp. 130–32.

16. It is interesting that the sheepskin garb of the Mossi pretenders is similar to the dress of the chiefs among the smaller tribal groups of the Voltaic culture area. If we can assume that culture traits characteristic of ritual and ceremonial practices tend to persist longer than most other traits, we might have evidence that the complex Mossi state evolved from the political organizations found among the smaller local groups. [171] [174]

17. The "naming of a name" speech is part of most Mossi *rites de passage*, and is often used to brag about some achievement or to cast aspersions on one's enemies. Most newly elected monarchs pledge good government, brag about their elevation, and vilify their enemies.

In his inaugural speech Naba Kom II said, "When plenty of water falls during the rainy season, the rivers and seas are glad because they are enlarged." "Kom" means "water," and Kom's speech meant that he pledged to bring happiness to all his subjects.

Boukary Koutou insulted his listeners by declaring, "Even if a hundred ghosts join together, they cannot harm an elephant." He was called Mogho Naba Wobogo ("elephant").

18. It is said that if the amulets were stolen during the interregnum, the thief had to be elected Mogho Naba; if they were stolen afterwards, the ruler lost the basis for the mystical quality of leadership and authority he had inherited from his ancestors.

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greeting a lower status benefactor, a man will get down and greet him from a kneeling position. It is because of this elaborate system of greeting, with the many opportunities thus provided for one person to slight another, that many important persons never go to the market. As a rule, the failure of any one person to give the required greeting to another when they meet in the market place is always an indication of strained relations between them.

The persons from whom an individual may buy goods, and the kinds of goods which may be purchased by one individual from another, are governed by convention and social relationships. A person may not buy anything from a relative except European goods. A man cannot buy any but cooked food in the market place, and often he asks a female relative or a passing female to buy it for him. To do the contrary is held to be unmanly and indicative of a bad character. A woman will not buy cotton cloth but will send a man to buy it for her. She would hate to have people believe that she has no male relative to weave it for her, or what is more likely, that she is too lazy to spin the cotton thread which would then be woven for her. A woman may purchase any type of commodity from other women, but she must be careful not to patronize men who are known to be libertines or with whom she is suspected of having an affair. She must also be careful about running errands for men, since people know that men often use this device to establish amorous relationships with women. Men also use this device to give presents, or to arrange secret meetings with them. If any man sees a female relative involved in any of these misadventures, he chases her away and more than likely curses the man, if he does not fight him. In any event, he warns the man to leave the woman alone.

The market is one of the few places where men and women can initiate relationships not sanctioned by their relatives. Under normal conditions marriages are arranged between unrelated individuals through the lineage members who establish "friendly" relationships. Two friends might ask their lineage heads for women to exchange as wives or the "friend" who has received more gifts from the other will give over a wife. Because the older men most often have goods and women at their disposal, they are usually the ones who receive wives. The result is that most young men have no wives, and until they inherit wives from lineage members, are continually seeking to establish intimate relations with women whom they meet on the market place. The technique which a young man employes to gain the favors of a woman he sees at market is highly stereotyped. First of all, he must ascertain that the woman in question is not a member of his maximal lineage or married to a member of his own lineage. A responsible

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837 man even refrains from making overtures to a woman whose husband's female relatives may be married to a member of his own [687] [613] lineage. He fears that a wronged husband may have the wives of his lineage brothers recalled, thus causing dissension within and between the two lineages. If none of these complications are present, a man seeks out a person who knows the woman and sends a message de- [431] claring his intentions. If the response is favorable, the man then buys [801] four large kola nuts (four being the number for a woman), wraps them together with 44 francs, and send them to his lady. This procedure may be followed on subsequent market days without the two parties ever coming into direct contact with each other. Finally, however, a rendezvous is arranged, and on the pretense of leaving the market to visit a relative for several days, the woman goes instead to her lover's village.

837 These casual affairs started at the market sometimes become quite 586 serious, and if for any reason they are sanctioned by the relatives of either the man or the woman, they often lead to the breakup of a [443] marriage. And since the market is the place where disputants of any [570] sort most likely come into contact, it is here that fights over "stolen" wives break out.

837 This pattern of extramarial relationships centering around the 443 market place is so common among the Mossi that the younger men, and even some of the older ones, are disappointed with the "market" when their mistresses do not appear. Mossi men who sit under the shelters around the market place can usually give an inquirer not only the name of a woman, the name and village of her husband and father, but also the name and village of her paramour. Characteristically enough, they are always "ignorant" of the escapades of their own female relatives or of the wives of their lineage members. The only 593 time when men act as though their relatives might be involved in 443 extramarital affairs is when for some purpose or another a man has to recall a wife or daughter who has gone to visit a relative in another village or district. Regardless of how pressing the problem may be, a man will seldom go directly to his father-in-law's house to recall the woman. He goes to the market nearest to his in-laws' village, and seeks his wife there. If he does not find her or any of her relatives, he goes to the part of the market in which people from her village sell their products and sends a message to her family that he will come for her the next day, or that he would like her to come home.

443 A market place is also one of the best places to look for news of a 203 runaway wife, or of any stranger in an area. The Mossi say that women have footprints like an elephant in that they can be found quite easily, but that the footprints are always clearest in the market.